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ABSTRACT

Leadership can improve reading curriculum in numerous ways. Teachers and supervisors show leadership in the way they decide how to teach and maintain students' attention; structure lessons; motivate students; give individualized attention; assess students; and solve problems. Reading supervisors provide leadership to students as well as teachers, helping teachers with teaching techniques and pacing. In addition, leadership is necessary in bringing about change in reading curriculum. Teachers must be knowledgeable about different methods, such as individualized instruction and guided reading, and they must know when each method is best employed. (PM)

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Establishing Leadership in the Reading Curriculum.

ED 478 824

by Marlow Ediger

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ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP IN THE READING CURRICULUM

Leadership to improve the reading curriculum is important. In many ways, each teacher is a leader in designing the reading curriculum. All teachers and supervisors need to make many decisions continually in ongoing lessons and units of study. The following are decisions which are made rather continuously by the reading teacher and supervisor, among others:

1. how to obtain and maintain pupil attention to the ongoing reading lesson.
2. how to sequence learnings so that pupil success in reading is an end result.
3. how to increase interest in reading.
4. how to help pupils perceive purpose for reading well.
5. how to pace each lesson in reading so that the reader achieves as much as possible.
6. how to motivate pupils to do much reading.
7. how to provide for individual differences in a classroom.
8. how to determine the present level of reading achievement of the reader.
9. how to measure reading achievement of pupils.
10. how to manage children who are waiting their turn to be taught (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Eight).

The above named problem areas, among others, need to be identified and solutions sought. Leadership provided by the reading supervisor should help classroom teachers ito identify and solve problem areas. A good leader is a problem solver.

Leadership in the Reading Curriculum

The reading supervisor needs to provide leadership in selecting learning opportunities which assist pupils to attend carefully to each lesson presentation. The teacher here might be assisted to observe each pupil carefully to see if they are truly attentive. The teacher may stand next to the pupil who is not attending in order that the focal point may become concentrating on the reading selection. Also, those pupils not attending may be seated in between those who are actively involved in ongoing reading experiences. This provides a role model for those not achieving as well as possible. The objectives of reading instruction should be clearly stated to pupils so that the latter might know what is salient to study. This should arouse pupils to pay attention to achieving objectives being stressed.

Second, the reading supervisor needs to assist teachers in

providing proper sequence in teaching and learning situations. With good sequence, each pupil is assisted in using background experiences to achieve the new objectives. Continual progress in reading achievement is possible for pupils individually if they experience prerequisites pertaining to the new leanings.

Third, the reading supervisor needs to provide leadership to teachers in securing the interests of pupils in reading. Quality instruction is the key to obtaining and maintaining learner interest in reading. Pupils' attention needs to be obtained so that each desires to achieve more optimally. Illustrations, films, filmstrips, video tapes, video disks, and CD ROMS, related to the lesson being taught, might well be used as materials of instruction to help build and keep learner interest in reading instruction. These audio visual aids provide situations whereby pupils raise questions for which answers may be sought through reading.

Fourth, the reading supervisor needs to help teachers develop purpose for reading. with purpose, there are salient reasons for reading. Reading is not done for the sake of doing so, but pupils accept reasons for reading print discourse. The purposes may be deductively presented by the teacher. Or, pupils inductively may be guided to perceive reasons for reading a given selection.

Fifth, proper pacing of each reading lesson is relevant. The teacher should not move forward too rapidly whereby pupil failure is bound to occur. Nor should the pace of instruction be too slow in which boredom is possible. How rapidly instruction should proceed will depend upon observing learners and making certain teaching and learning occur at an appropriate rate by which each pupil achieves as optimally as possible.

Sixth, motivation in pupil achievement is vital. Proper motivation involves increasing energy levels for learning. Motivation may be intrinsic and comes from within the pupil in personally desiring to achieve maximally in reading instruction. Extrinsic motivation may involve pupils being energized through inexpensive prizes being received. The pupil needs to know what to do to attain a prize. Ideally, intrinsic motivation should be the ideal in learning to read. However, there may be pupils who are motivated through extrinsic approaches largely.

Allington (2002) wrote the following pertaining to his research conducted: ... In too many schools, lower achieving readers receive appropriate reading materials only when they participate in special - support instruction (e.g. special education resource rooms, Title 1 in class support, bilingual education blocks). In other words, in too many cases, the lower

achieving student receive, perhaps an hour of appropriate instruction each day and four hours of instruction based on grade- level texts they cannot read. No child who spends 80% of his/her instructional time in texts inappropriately difficult will make much progress academically.

The exemplary teachers we studied noticed that the highest achieving students (1) received a steady diet of "easy" texts -- texts they could read accurately, fluently, and with good comprehension -- (2) consistently out gained both the average - achieving students and the lower achieving students, year after year. They also noticed that motivation for reading was dramatically influenced by reading success. They acted on these observations by creating multi- level, multisourced curricula that met the needs of the diverse range of students in their classrooms.

Seventh, individual difference among learners need adequate attention. Pupils differ from each other in a plethora of ways. These need to be attended to by the teacher whereby pupils are aided to achieve optimally in the reading curriculum. The interests, goals, and needs of pupils should assist the teacher in determining the objectives, learning opportunities, and assessment procedures in reading instruction.

To provide for individual differences might mean to give extra instruction to slow learners, provide one on one teaching, and/or small group instruction before and after school, on Saturdays, or in special summer programs. Adaptations in reading materials may be made such as locating appropriate materials for children who do not read on grade level but read at a more complex or less complex levels. Pupils need challenging but understandable reading materials, suited to their individual developmental levels. Not only selecting preferable genres to read but also a different mode such as computerized instruction may provide for individual differences in reading (Gunning, 2000).

Eighth, The starting point for any pupil in reading instruction needs to be based upon their individual current reading level. This can be achieved by using an informal reading inventory (IRI). Reading teachers can give this inventory to all pupils, but that may be too time consuming. Perhaps, those pupils whose reading level is most doubtful through teacher observation may then take the IRI. Standardized reading inventories may also be given to the learner. However, these are not based on the content which pupils are reading presently such as in the basal.

Ninth, means of measuring pupil achievement are very much debated. State mandated testing is the law of the land in almost all states in the nation. Hopefully, these will give usable results

to teachers in that they are diagnostic and pinpoint what pupils need to work on to become better readers. Teacher accountability is tied in closely with mandated testing. Landgraf (2002), indicates four steps of accountability which need to be met

1. set clear goals for achieving academic excellence in our schools.
2. recommends specific solutions for immediate implementation, targeting at- risk learners.
3. establish reachable benchmarks to be reported every year, showing the public what progress was made toward these goals by each school.
4. show concrete evidence of reaching these goals within three years with replicable steps to ratchet up the model and share what works.

Leadership is necessary to bring about change in the reading curriculum. Societal changes abound. The reading curriculum also needs to change within the framework of what pupils need to learn to function well in the 21st century. Leaders in reading are needed who can bring about and sustain desired change. Pupils need to achieve viable goals in literacy since society ups their wishes and wants of the level of pupil reading achievement. First, a moral goal of eliminating the gap in reading achievement between and among the races is salient. In a democracy, pupils need to have opportunities to learn as much as possible. Each stakeholder in the reading curriculum must be treated with respect so that the best ideas may come forth to improve the curriculum. Second, participants need to understand the concept of change. Selective innovations must be in the offing. Collective meaning and commitment is needed to move from where the school is to something better in reading instruction. Not everyone will agree with the changes being proposed; this is to be expected. The resistors to change should make their wants and fears known so they can be addressed. Values of people in the educational organization need to be examined and transformed to something which is lasting or enduring. Third, improving relations among faculty and support staff is necessary for enduring changes to take place. Too frequently, human relations are not what they should be. Trust needs to be developed among all members of the school community so that ideas pertaining to change may be examined and evaluated. Fourth, the leader might wish school employees to talk about, visit sites of change, and invite queries pertaining to change. The feelings and emotions of people are inherent

when working toward a changing reading curriculum. It is a difficult bill to guide individuals to work collectively toward change. Fifth, the leader needs to assist teachers and others in the school setting to create knowledge as well as share it with others. Critical and creative thinking pertaining to existing knowledge possessed then needs to be analyzed through critical thinking and synthesized through creative thought. New knowledge should arise which might well be applicable to solving problems in a changing reading curriculum. Coherence comes about when fragmented knowledge is shared (Fullan, 2002).

Pupils need to be involved profitably when the teacher is teaching others in a guided reading lesson. There are numerous learning opportunities which pupils may experience on their own and away from the guided teaching lesson. The teacher needs to plan carefully so that these pupils experience sequential progress. Too frequently, those not experiencing a guided reading lesson fail to find something worthwhile to do own their own. The following, among others, may provide a rich set of learning opportunities for pupils not being in a guided reading lesson:

1. independent sharing of what has been read with a peer or adult volunteer in the classroom.
2. choosing from alternative tasks in reading within a learning centers framework. Each task at a learning center is clearly stated and the needed materials for task completion are at the center.
3. doing a synonym or antonym hunt.
4. engaging in an art project to reveal comprehension of a library book.
5. constructing a model to use in a creative dramatics presentation to indicate what has been learned from reading.

Leaders involved in improving the reading curriculum need to be well versed in methods and materials of reading instruction. Continuos progress for each pupil is a must. The objectives, the learning opportunities to achieve these objectives, and the appraisal procedure to notice that which pupils have learned need to be well designed. Leadership is needed to develop a quality curriculum in reading.

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